

Up Close and Personal-Children's FSP Program Success

By: Maria Vargas



Countywide Children's Full Service Partnership (FSP) administration has conducted annual Family Satisfaction surveys over the past several years to evaluate the success of FSP and determine if the families being served felt Children's FSP programs were as successful as the accumulated clinical data indicated. Every year, more than 80% of surveyed families have consistently responded that their treatment team was supportive, they received services when and where they wanted them, and the services they received were beneficial to their child's wellbeing and happiness. Although the annual surveys provide valuable feedback, in fiscal year 2011-2012, Countywide Children's FSP administration went a step further in our quest to measure family satisfaction. Recognizing that the definitive measure of success for any social service program is client satisfaction, on Monday, June 4th, 2012, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Children's Systems of Care hosted the first "Family Focus Group" at the California Endowment in downtown Los Angeles.

Eleven families participated in the event as part of our continued effort to improve the quality of Children's FSP programs through direct feedback from consumers. To facilitate participation, families were provided with transportation services to and from The California Endowment, as well as interpreter services for those who spoke Spanish and Mandarin.

The attendees broke into three small groups to share their experiences with FSP. The group facilitators invited families to provide feedback about the families' experiences with FSP, how FSP assisted the families and their children's behavior before and while enrolled in FSP. In addition, families were asked to provide candid feedback regarding changes they would recommend to FSP.

When asked how their children and families had changed as a result of FSP, the parents enthusiastically shared their stories. "Our family was saved," said the Avila family, whose daughter refused to leave her home and struggled with mental health issues after witnessing two deaths in her community. Now their daughter attends school everyday, her grades have improved, and she is on a dance team.

Other families shared similar success stories: "My son communicates more with me and his therapist...he is not as withdrawn," said Mrs. Morales. "With their help, I became an advocate and proactive for my daughter," said Mr. Rodriguez.

Overall, the feedback we received indicated that the relationships between the child and family improved markedly. The most important changes were with the parents' confidence in their parenting skills; learning how to advocate for their children; and learning how to strengthen their family. It was also observed that the families' level of commitment and dedication to improving their children's daily functioning made a tremendous difference in their children's lives. All the families agreed that Children's FSP is a much needed and critical program for those requiring intensive mental health services.

It is clearly evident that the implementation of Child FSP programs throughout Los Angeles County has been a great success. Mental health services are now being provided to twice as many children from ethnic populations who were previously unaware these services existed. This level of family-reported success truly demonstrates a commitment to hope, wellness, recovery, and resiliency.

Thank you to the agencies that helped us with recruiting the families for this event and special thanks to the families who participated and provided us with their feedback.